

Letter from Samuel P. Langley to Alexander Graham Bell, March 29, 1901

20 aviation SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. *Washington, U.S.A* . March 29 , 1901. Dear Mr. Bell:

Doctor Adler tells me that you are seeking the aid of some one who can examine works in the various libraries in Washington with a view to getting references to the literature of Aeronautics, and he regrets that he cannot recommend a suitable person. Astronomy or Chemistry, or any established science, has a 2 literature of books which speak with knowledge and authority. Aeronautics, or at least Aerodromics, has none — only a mass of ignorant conjecture with here and there a sound idea, only to be recognized by some one who has learned at the cost of after experiment, and in retrospect, what was worth reading, for here everything is still in the formative state.

I think that you will probably save yourself much trouble if you will go through the small library which I have gathered during the past 3 ten years. While it necessarily includes in nearly every part much that is conjectural and that time is showing to be of little value, it is in the main a good selection of all published matter relating to Aerodromics which is based upon experiment. It has comparatively little about balloons.

As I told you some time since, everything in this little collection is at your disposal, and I should take pleasure in sending you a dozen or more volumes at a time, and when you are through with those, others. In 4 this way you can glance through what I believe is the most important part of all aerodromic literature, at your own convenience.

Library of Congress

Very sincerely yours, S P Langley Professor A. Graham Bell, Volta Bureau, Washington,
D. C. P